

MARY WASHINGTON HOUSE  
FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA

*Spotsylvania Co*

HABS NO. 11-2

HABS  
VA  
89-FRED  
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
DISTRICT NO. 11

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
PHILIP N. STEIN, DISTRICT OFFICER  
21 LAW BLDG., FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA

HABS  
VA.  
89-FRED  
2.

MARY WASHINGTON HOUSE  
Charles and Lewis Streets  
Fredericksburg  
Spotsylvania County  
Virginia

Owner: Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities.

Date of Erection: Eighteenth Century.

Architect and Builder: No record.

Present Condition: Good.

Number of Stories: Two (central part), one and a half (wings).

Materials of Construction: Brick and wood on stone and brick foundations.

Other Existing Records: See text. <sup>1</sup>

Additional Data: See following pages.

- <sup>1</sup> White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs, volume 2, number 1, page 10.  
Faris, J.T., Historic Shrines of America, 262.  
Historic Gardens of Virginia, compiled by James River Garden Club, 165-7.  
Lancaster, R.A., Jr., Historic Virginia Homes and Churches, 300.  
Carson, W.E., Historic Shrines of Virginia, 19

# HISTORICAL DATA

The Mary Washington House is located on the original lot 107, on the northwest corner of Charles and Lewis Streets. Lot 108 to the west of lot 107 and a part of the original property is now owned and occupied by others. It is recorded at Spotsylvania Courthouse, Deed Book "H", page 224, September 18, 1772, that George Washington bought from Michael Robinson lots 107 and 108 in the town of Fredericksburg including all buildings, etc.

As the deed specifically mentions "buildings" when these lots were purchased by George Washington, it is evident that there was more than one building on the property at that time. In 1929-1930 this property was restored by Philip N. Stern, architect. From the physical evidences obtained by him during this work, it was definitely determined that the two one story and a half wings on Charles Street were the oldest buildings. The two story central portion was built in between these two cottages and the brick dining room on Lewis Street was the last addition to the group.

There are also evidences remaining in the cellar, of three different sets of steps leading down from various outside entrances that have now disappeared.

That the first floor of the central portion had, originally, solid panelled outside shutters was discovered, at this time, when the architect, upon measuring some later pantry cupboards, found that these cupboard doors, which were old panels, were the exact size of the window openings and fitted perfectly. These original shutters were then re-hung. The original porch columns were also found concealed in the walls of a room that had been added to the west of the drawing room and which has now been removed, again opening up the old porch. The original columns have been preserved and may still be seen.

The woodwork on the first floor was painted the familiar gray green of the colonial period and on the second floor, gray blue. Both stories have now been painted green.

All roofs are now covered with the Williamsburg type of asbestos shingles, on account of their fire-proof qualities, but under the tin roof that was removed to permit laying these asbestos shingles, were found the old wooden shingles with rounded butts, giving the appearance of fish scales.

While the age of the old outside kitchen is not known, it has been found that there was a kitchen, at one time, in the basement under the drawing room of the central portion, which had a large open fire place with iron crane in same. This fireplace has now been closed up and the iron crane removed.

Reference: Philip N. Stern

Mrs. Mary Washington lived in this house from 1775 until the time of her death, 1789. It is stated that she died in the corner room on the first floor. The bedroom on the second floor of the central building is known as the George Washington room.

The old boxwood in the garden to the west of the house is original.

George Washington, on a visit to his mother, planted thirteen horse chestnut trees along a walk leading from this house to Kenmore, where his sister Betty Washington Lewis, lived. One of these trees still lives. November 11, 1781 George Washington, en-route from Yorktown to Philadelphia, visited his mother here. In 1784 Lafayette, for the sole purpose of paying his respects to Washington's mother, visited her here. April 14, 1789 she had another visit from Washington who had received notice of his election to the Presidency of the United States. He had galloped from Mount Vernon to spend an hour or more with her before leaving for New York. Mary Washington died August 25, 1789.

Reference: Anna Marshall Braxton in Historic Gardens of Virginia, p.p. 165-167.

*Philip N. Stern*

*Reviewed 1936, H.C.F.*